

House Joint Resolution 32
April 23, 2009
Presented by Chas Van Genderen
Senate Local Government Committee

Mr. Chairman and committee members, for the record I am Chas Van Genderen, Acting Administrator for the parks division of Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP).

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks rises in support of HJ 32. Heritage parks and resources are an important part of the Montana State Park system. Of the 53 state parks, we have 19 that are primarily cultural sites. These include seven National Historic Landmarks and nine National Register sites. These are places of great significance like Rosebud Battlefield in SE Montana, Pictograph Cave near Billings and Traveler's Rest in Lolo. We also have some that are less significant.

These sites are important to Montana and help define who we, as a people, are. They tell the story on our landscape and through our artifacts. We have done a good job of saying "Yes" to preserving places as state parks. As a park system, however, we are struggling to fund day-to-day operations and maintenance. One approach we are using is to be more business-like while generating more revenues and to avoid asking for general fund monies. Heritage parks have not traditionally been good revenue generators. It is a challenge.

State Parks has recently renewed its focus on working together with the Montana Historical Society and The Montana Heritage Commission to improve management. This resolution may help us further identify efficiencies, new approaches, help us to streamline and ultimately better manage on behalf of our citizens. FWP urges a do pass on HJ 32.